

Normandy. An additional 13,000 aircraft supported Allied Forces on D-day.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower—the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe—addressed the troops immediately prior to the invasion, saying:

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force! You are about to embark upon a great crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers in arms on other fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

And by the end of August 1944, all of northern France was liberated and the invading forces were reorganized for the drive into Germany where they would eventually meet up with Soviet forces advancing from the east to bring an end to the Third Reich and its tyranny of terror.

The aftermath of World War II saw much of Europe devastated in a way that is now difficult to imagine. Over 36 million Europeans died in the conflict; 19 million of them were civilians. Millions more were left homeless, the European economy had collapsed, and much of the European industrial infrastructure was destroyed.

But from these ashes of war came the beginning of a new era for international cooperation and diplomacy. In the wake of World War II, the United Nations agreed to outlaw wars of aggression in an attempt to prevent a third world war. With the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, in 1949 and the institutionalization of the Helsinki Accords 25 years later, we committed ourselves to the work that began with the assault on those beachheads—Utah, Omaha, Juno, Sword, and Gold Beach—in June 1944.

The guiding principles of the Helsinki Final Act are the foundations of lasting peace. These principles are worth enumerating: sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty, refraining from threat or use of force, inviolability of frontiers, territorial integrity of States, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-intervention in internal affairs, respect for human rights, self determination of peoples, co-operation among States, and fulfillment in good faith of obligations under international law. Additionally, the Helsinki Final Act reaffirmed mankind's fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief.

Today, we remember the tremendous efforts of Allied Forces as they signaled to the world that unprovoked aggression and genocide have no place in our international order and will be met with our greatest resolve. I am reminded of the Maryland National Guard units who participated in the D-day landings. These brave Marylanders

served with great distinction in the 29th Infantry Division, fighting their way across Western Europe and liberating France and Holland. The 29th Division suffered one of the highest casualty rates of any American division during World War II. We must honor those heroes by safeguarding all that they fought and sacrificed for.

Today, there are one million surviving World War II veterans in the U.S., and 17,346 of them are Marylanders. These same heroes who landed on those beaches in Normandy and parachuted behind enemy lines 70 years ago are joined by veterans who have served in conflicts spanning from the Korean war to the war in Afghanistan. Today, I call on each of my colleagues to commit themselves to the work of meeting our obligations to all of these veterans. The best way to honor their sacrifices is to ensure that we are unwavering in our support for them and their families.

NEVADA'S FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR RECIPIENTS

Mr. HELLER. Madam President, today I wish to congratulate two of Nevada's own, MSG Davis B. Leonard and Private Gaetano R. Benza, for being awarded the National Order of the French Legion of Honor in the rank of chevalier. Their service to our country and dedication to ensuring freedom beyond America's borders earn them a unique place among the outstanding men and women who have valiantly defended our Nation.

As we approach the anniversary of D-day, nearly 70 years after World War II, these heroes are being honored with the Legion of Honor, France's highest distinction. Veterans who risked their lives during World War II and fought on French territory have this award bestowed upon them as a token of gratitude from France for defending liberty on their soil. The sacrifices these brave soldiers made set America and the world on a path to peace, freedom, and liberty that we as Americans enjoy today. Master Sergeant Leonard and Private Benza are joining the ranks of other notable Americans, such as GEN Dwight D. Eisenhower and Douglas MacArthur and even, as an institution, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, by receiving this honorable recognition.

A highly decorated veteran from Henderson, NV, MSG Davis Leonard served in the U.S. Army Air Force Reserve as part of the 8th Air Force. He was transferred to England, where he flew his first of 64 combat missions as a bombardier and navigator. Master Sergeant Leonard was active in the Battle of Northern France, Ardennes, Rhineland, and Central Europe. For his service, he earned several medals, including the Distinguished Flying Cross with two bronze and one silver oak leaf medal. Upon his return home, he worked to rebuild our country working for Pacific Telephone Company for 30

years. Now retired at the age of 91, Master Sergeant Leonard resides in Henderson with his wife.

Private Gaetano Benza from Las Vegas, NV, spent 4 months transporting supplies and ammunition to the men on Omaha Beach as a longshoreman for the Port Battalion 297th Port Company. During the invasion of Normandy, Private Benza worked tirelessly, while under heavy enemy fire, to ensure that the soldiers that landed were equipped for battle. After spending 4 months at Omaha Beach, he moved to La Havre, France, where he would remain until the end of the war. Awarded for his service to our country, Private Benza received the World War II Victory medal. Once he returned home, he continued his education and became a barber at Nellis Air Force Base. While retired from the Armed Forces, 89-year-old Private Benza refuses to retire from his active lifestyle and is still a barber in the Las Vegas area.

Their commitment to this country, as well as their dedication to their families and communities, exemplified why the legacy of all World War II veterans must be preserved for generations to come. These veterans truly are the "greatest generation"—selflessly serving not for recognition but because it was the right thing to do. As a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I recognize that Congress has a responsibility not only to honor these brave individuals but to ensure they are cared for when they return home. I remain committed to upholding this promise for our veterans and servicemembers in Nevada and throughout the Nation.

Please join me in congratulating these men for their acts of heroism and valor that helped to defend France from the greatest enemy they or we have ever faced. May we never forget the brave actions by these heroes that allowed the Allied troops to begin a march across Europe and defeat tyranny. Today, I join the Clark County community and citizens of the Silver State to congratulate these courageous men and honorable Nevadans.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO GORDON STEWART

• Mr. CRAPO. Madam President, I wish to honor Gordon Stewart, who is retiring from serving as the air traffic manager at Boise Airport.

Gordon channeled his early exposure to aviation, through family members who owned airplanes, into a distinguished career. Gordon got his start in aviation through his military service. He served for 3 years in the U.S. Army, through which he received his air traffic control training. He was a distinguished graduate at Fort Rucker, AL, in both basic and advanced individual training. He then went on to work at various helicopter training airports,